THE DEATH OF KENNEDY

An evening-long investigation

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At 12.30 p.m. on Friday, November 22, 1963, the thirty-fifth President of the United States, John F. Kennedy, was assassinated in Dealey Plaza, Dallas, Texas. That much is all too certain. But when, less than forty-eight hours later, Jack Ruby silenced Lee Harvey Oswald, doubt was born—doubt which may never be resolved now that cancer has silenced Ruby.

The fearful possibility remains that there is alive today someone who set out to kill the President. Of course, the prestigious Warren Commission charged by the new President Johnson to examine all the circumstances and be satisfied of the truth, reported that Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone, killed John F. Kennedy. But *was* he alone, or was he part of a conspiracy? Dallas was known to be hostile to Kennedy at the time—could there have been a plot to kill him? Might Jack Ruby have silenced Oswald on behalf of others? The loose ends the Warren Commission left behind when it disbanded have given rise to serious doubts. Its Report, at first believed even without being read, now convinces only one in three Americans, according to one recent poll.

The Commission maintained that one bullet wounded both the President and Governor Connally, one missed the car completely, and the third caused the President's fatal head injury. Only one bullet was ever found, commission exhibit No. 399. They maintained that it had passed through Kennedy's neck and had continued on through Connally's ribs and wrist. Yet 'Bullet 399' is scarcely marked and the Governor is certain he was hit by a separate shot.

A spectator, Abraham Zapruder, filmed the whole scene with an 8 mm. cine-camera. From its running speed the F.B.I. calculated that the three shots could not have spanned more than 5.6 seconds. But could an out-of-practice Oswald with a poorly maintained rifle have achieved in that time a degree of marksmanship which F.B.I. and rifle experts completely failed to match?

In a complicated reconstruction it appeared that the President could not have been hit *before* the 210th frame of the film, that Governor Connally could not have been hit *after* the 240th frame, and that the fatal shot hit the President at frame number 313. With Zapruder's camera known to be running at 18.3 frames per second, it follows that both Kennedy and Connally must have been hit within about 1.6 seconds.

Yet the experts found that Oswald's old-fashioned Mannlicher-Carcano rifle cannot be fired twice in under 2.3 seconds. On this basis either a single bullet must have hit both men or there must have been two assassins. Yet the Commission asserted 'it is not necessary to any essential findings . . . to determine just which shot hit Governor Connally.' How could three out of the seven Commissioners, unconvinced by 'the single-bullet' hypothesis, be signatories to the finding that Oswald was the sole assassin?

The Commission found no credible evidence of any shots coming from anywhere other than the sixth floor window of the Texas School Book Depository, above and behind the President. Yet the same Zapruder film, on which they placed so much reliance, clearly shows the final shot knocking the President backwards and to the left. And the critic Mark Lane has produced eye-witnesses who reckon at least one shot came from behind the picket fence at the top of the grassy knoll to the side of the road.

These then are some of the most crucial areas of doubt surrounding the assassination, which we shall examine tonight.

Rejected at first by American publishers, Mark Lane's critique of the Commission, the book *Rush to Judgment*, is now a best-seller. His film, considered too hot to handle in the United States, will be given its world première tonight on BBC-2. Two of the lawyers responsible to the Commission for crucial areas of the investigation have come to Britain to answer the critics. Arlen Specter, now District Attorney in Philadelphia, was largely responsible for ascertaining the facts of the assassination, and for the 'single-bullet,' thesis. David Belin, now a leading attorney in Iowa, was concerned with the assassin's identity.

Talking with them will be Kenneth Harris, who, with the production team, travelled the United States meeting the principal Commission members and lawyers. And Cliff Michelmore will interpret his findings in Dallas with the aid of a 300 sq. foot model of Dealey Plaza.

Finally two leading jurists, Lord Devlin, and from Yale, Professor Alexander Bickel, will assess the evidence and consider whether or not the case should be re-opened. Up to now the Administration has remained adamant—only substantial new evidence would justify such a significant move.

However, the most damaging charge facing the Commission today is that they were guilty of mis-handling the evidence they did have available to them.

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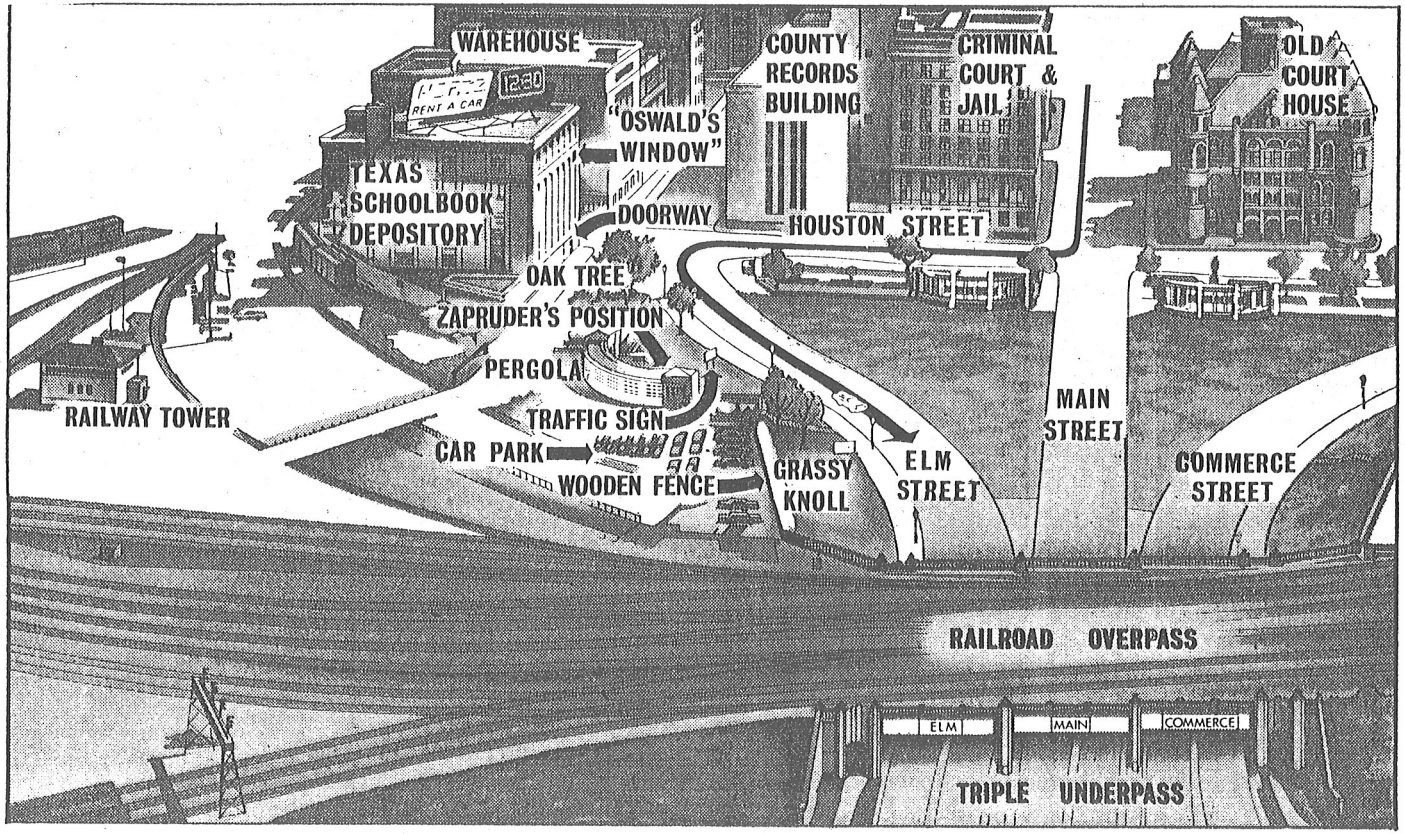
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